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Africa and France: An Enduring Relationship

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A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
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[redacted]

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 15 October 1983
was used in this report.*

President Mitterrand's decision in August to send troops, aircraft, and other military equipment to Chad to counter Libyan intervention there indicates that Paris intends to preserve France's traditional role as the most important Western actor in Africa. The move contrasted with Mitterrand's rhetoric during his election campaign in 1981, when he heralded a lower French profile in the region. It also marked a trend toward again centralizing control of African policy in the President's hands, following an attempt to decentralize it that was responsible for much of the hesitation in French policy. [REDACTED] 25X1

African pressure on Mitterrand to intervene in Chad highlights the dependence of West African states on the French security umbrella to protect them from Libyan and other threats to their survival. Moderate African leaders like Senegal's Diouf and Ivory Coast's Houphouet-Boigny have made it clear that they regard anything less than wholehearted French security support as a clear invitation to Libyan expansion throughout the region. Paris now appears persuaded that failure to act would undermine French credibility and influence in Africa. Indeed, the Socialist government wants to reassure worried African leaders—including those previously criticized by the Socialists—that France will honor its obligations [REDACTED] 25X1

Mitterrand is keenly aware of the need to preserve extensive French economic interests in Africa, especially in its former colonies. Of particular concern are French participation in much of the commercial activity in West Africa and access to strategic minerals in such places as Niger, Nigeria, Zaire, and South Africa. The Mitterrand government does not want to jeopardize efforts to develop financially profitable relations with African countries outside the French community. Total French trade with Nigeria and South Africa, for example, now exceeds the volume of trade with all of Paris's former African colonies. [REDACTED] 25X1

Continued problems in the French economy could force Paris to cut back on its financial and military assistance to Africa. France probably will not be able to meet the growing needs of its African clients indefinitely. This will be particularly worrisome for French-speaking West African Governments that depend on French budgetary support and technical assistance to keep their economies afloat. [REDACTED] 25X1

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We anticipate that Mitterrand, as well as moderate African leaders, will be looking to the United States to make up any shortfalls in French assistance. All parties probably will emphasize the importance to the United States of maintaining economic well-being in the region and minimizing opportunities for Libyan or Soviet Bloc adventurism. [REDACTED]

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We anticipate that Mitterrand, to elicit a favorable US response on greater financial support to Africa, probably will prove willing to continue, and in some cases to improve, quiet cooperation with the United States in areas of common interest in Africa. Such cooperation will be limited, however, by his desire to preserve French interests and to enhance his standing with Third World leaders. Paris also would become more intransigent if it believed US firms were making unacceptable inroads on the financially lucrative positions of French companies. [REDACTED]

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Any reduction in French economic and military support—if not offset by increased US aid—would almost certainly prompt renewed efforts by Tripoli and Moscow to extend their influence in Africa. A sudden economic downturn and resultant decline in living standards, for example, could prompt urban unrest that Libya might use to exploit the fragile regimes in the area, especially those with sizable Muslim populations. We believe that the Soviets will continue to offer military equipment and training but will not try to replace levels of economic assistance now provided by France. Moscow also is likely to cite any African economic hardships resulting from a French pullback as a failure of French and US policies in Africa. [REDACTED]

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Africa and France: An Enduring Relationship

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Introduction

The early indications that President Mitterrand's Socialist government would abandon the activist, interventionist role of previous French administrations raised serious concerns among Francophone African leaders and others about Paris's willingness to honor its longstanding commitments in Africa.¹ France's large—if somewhat tardy—response to the Libyan intervention in Chad has allayed some of these fears. The French had deployed almost 2,000 ground troops and 16 combat aircraft to Chad by the end of August 1983 and had halted, at least for the moment, the Libyan forces and those of Chadian factional leader Goukouni Oueddei.

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In addition to demonstrating once again France's capability to intervene effectively in Africa, the Chadian crisis also underscored that the first impulse of most Francophone African leaders who feel threatened is to look to the former colonial metropole for protection and support. Indeed, the deployment of French forces was preceded by repeated appeals for French action by many Francophone leaders. Nonetheless, the French response in Chad has not fully eased African concerns about Paris's resolve to stay the course.

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Whether the French retain the will and capability to act as a guarantor of regional stability in Africa and whether the Africans still want them to play this role are questions of considerable significance for the United States. If the answer to either is no, the United States will remain as the only Western power capable of deterring direct or indirect threats against the weak and unstable regimes of the region.

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¹ In this paper the term "Francophone Africa" includes the former colonies of Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Upper Volta. Zaire, Rwanda, and Burundi, though French speaking because they were Belgium's colonies, are considered separately from the French community.

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To answer these questions, this paper looks at the implications of French intervention in Chad in terms of broader French interests throughout black Africa. The paper delineates the French role in the political, economic, and cultural life of the Francophone states and outlines the vigorous extension of French commercial activity developing in other regions of Africa as well. Trends now developing that could jeopardize Franco-African ties are discussed as are possible alternatives if the French presence should falter.

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French Socialist Policies Toward Africa

Although France's African policy was not a major issue in the presidential campaign in 1981, the Socialists' campaign rhetoric indicated that their victory would prompt major adjustments in French strategy in the region. In an interview with a leading African publication, for example, Mitterrand charged that President Giscard, by relying on the use of French intervention forces in Africa, had failed to resist effectively Soviet and Libyan expansionism and had allowed the United States to make inroads in Africa through health and rural development programs. The Socialist leader advocated deep cutbacks in French commercial dealings with South Africa, political and economic support to southern African "liberation movements," and a strong emphasis on human rights. A Socialist Party document released in April 1981, shortly before Mitterrand's election, went even further by calling for renegotiation—implying a reduction—of French defense commitments to African states.

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Following Mitterrand's victory at the polls in May, the new government initially moved to place its own Socialist stamp on African policy. French officials announced, for example, that relations with Africa

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The French Stake in Sub-Saharan Africa

The French stake in Sub-Saharan Africa is substantial and wide ranging:

- *France relies on Africa as an important supplier of strategic minerals—petroleum, uranium, manganese, copper, and cobalt.*
- *French interests own all or part of over three-fourths of all commercial firms in Francophone Africa. The largest, the West Africa Company (CFAO), has more than 60 subsidiaries in Africa, employs about 16,000 people, and had a turnover in 1981—the latest year for which data are available—of more than \$1.5 billion.*
- *The African franc zone organization, while committing Paris to underwrite a stable, convertible currency in Francophone Africa, also controls a part of member countries' foreign reserves and has used these funds on occasion to support the French currency.*
- *France provides African countries with more than \$1 billion annually in economic and military aid, an amount that constitutes nearly 60 percent of all UNCODED assistance worldwide.*

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- *Paris also underwrites the salaries of more than 10,000 expatriate teachers, technicians, and advisers in Sub-Saharan Africa, many of whom hold key positions in Francophone African governments.*

This information was drawn from US Embassy reports, the press, and "Foreign Military Activity in Sub-Saharan Africa" (DIA).

would be conducted on a strictly government-to-government basis in keeping with the sovereign equality of all nations—a pointed rejection of France's traditional paternalistic approach and of Giscard's personal relations with such leaders as Mobutu of Zaire, Bongo of Gabon, and former Central African ruler Bokassa. The Socialist government also:

- Declared it intended to increase African participation in planning and implementing development projects and to shift French aid away from direct budgetary support.
- Condemned South African racial policies and stated that the UN ban on arms transfers to South Africa, which the Giscard government had adopted in 1977, would henceforth be strictly enforced.
- Announced that France would press for an early settlement in Namibia based on UN resolution 435, which calls for South African withdrawal from the territory followed by UN-supervised elections.

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Countering Soviet and Other Radical Influences

Mitterrand and his top advisers came into office firmly wedded to the notion that Soviet and Cuban gains in Africa over recent years could be halted or even reversed by subtle diplomacy, economic support, and judicious military assistance to what it viewed as "progressive" regimes. Mitterrand's personal role in weaning African nationalists like Houphouet-Boigny from the French Communists in the early 1950s, combined with his success in reducing the Communist vote at home, probably led him to believe that France's Socialist government could outmaneuver Moscow and Havana in Africa.

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In addition to Mitterrand's long-term objective of reducing Soviet and Cuban influence in Africa—thereby easing potential threats to French interests

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there—we believe the President probably sees several tactical advantages to improving relations with “progressive” regimes. These include:

- Demonstrating French “independence” from the United States in the Third World when Paris is widely perceived to be drawing closer to Washington on East-West security issues.
- Deflecting criticism from within Mitterrand’s Socialist Party—and from the Communist Party which has a role in the government—of the government’s accommodating approach to key Franco-phone partners with which it has important economic and political ties.
- Moderating opposition in Africa and among some frontline African states to continuing commercial ties between France and South Africa. []

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During Mitterrand’s first two years, Paris took several steps to broaden its contacts and influence among the “progressive” regimes. The French have been most active—and, in our judgment, most successful—in countries where some French influence remained despite an evolution during the 1960s or 1970s toward more radical politics. According to US Embassy reports, for example, the Mitterrand government began in mid-1981 to seek improved ties with Benin in response to President Kerekou’s apparent dissatisfaction with Soviet and Libyan assistance. []

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French officials also thought they saw signs in early 1982 that Congolese President Sassou-Nguesso wanted to loosen his country’s close ties with the Soviets, according to the US Embassy in Paris. Mitterrand visited the Congo in October 1982 and has used summit diplomacy and security assistance to try to regain ground lost to the Soviets. []

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Mitterrand also has sought to improve long troubled relations with Guinea, despite his party’s protests against President Sekou Toure’s poor human rights record. He invited the Guinean leader to Paris in September 1982 as part of an effort to encourage a recent drift away from the Soviets. According to the US Embassy in Conakry, Franco-Guinean relations are slowly warming, especially in the economic area. []

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The French also have attempted to use their Socialist credentials to try to wean “progressive” regimes like Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia from Soviet and Cuban influence. They have offered aid and increased trade, but have had no great success. [] 25X1

The willingness of the present French Government to assume the role played in Africa by previous governments was put to the test most clearly by the Libyan intervention in Chad. Libyan military assistance enabled former Chadian President Goukouni Oueddei—who had been forced from power by Hissan Habre in June 1982—to seize the northern oasis town of Faya Largeau and establish himself in the north following an offensive that began in June 1983. [] 25X1

French material support enabled Habre to retake Faya Largeau in July, but this success did not compensate for the impact on frightened Francophone Africans of France’s refusal to respond to Habre’s appeals for direct French intervention. The Mitterrand government’s insistence that it was not bound by the mutual assistance pact of 1976 to do more than provide instructors and logistic assistance was legally correct but only added to African concern about the adequacy of French security guarantees. [] 25X1

The French intervened directly only after massive intervention of Libyan air and armored units forced Chadian Government troops out of Faya Largeau once again on 10 August. By the end of August, almost 2,000 French ground troops supported by combat aircraft had drawn a “red line” across Chad at roughly the 15th parallel beyond which the French say they will not allow the Libyan-backed Chadian dissidents to advance. This brought the Libyan-Goukouni forces to a halt and resulted in an uneasy military standoff, but it left open the question of how the Libyans and rebels were to be compelled to withdraw and a de facto partition of the country avoided. [] 25X1

Changes in the Policymaking Apparatus

Divisions among French policymakers lay behind France’s hesitant reaction to the situation in Chad. Early in its administration, the Mitterrand government sought to restructure the apparatus responsible

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for French African policy. Mitterrand's initial moves in this direction included naming his longtime confidant Guy Penne to the Elysee African affairs adviser post—in spite of Penne's admitted lack of experience in African matters—and reaffirming the primacy of the Foreign Ministry in formulating and executing African policy. Although the President took care publicly to emphasize his special interest in African matters, he apparently left his key ministers—Foreign Minister Cheysson and Cooperation Minister Cot—relatively free to explore new diplomatic and economic initiatives with African leaders. []

that France's ability to play a prominent role in world affairs would be seriously weakened by a fragmentation of the pro-French states in Africa. The Socialists also are convinced that maintaining and expanding French commercial relations in Africa is necessary for domestic economic recovery, particularly at a time of high domestic unemployment. [] 25X1

The decentralization of the policy process touched off serious infighting within the government on policy toward Africa that pitted the advocates of a forceful defense of French national interests against those who oppose French involvement in African "tribal quarrels." Widely published reports indicate, for example, that Foreign Minister Cheysson took the latter position in regard to policy toward Chad, while Defense Minister Hernu and Cooperation Minister Nucci both argued for a strong response. []

The fact that a Socialist government that took office pledged to a renunciation of military intervention in African affairs now finds itself directly involved in the Chadian conflict is an indicator of the evolution in its policies and attitudes. The government now appears to recognize that, despite its misgivings about authoritarian African rulers, the realities of French interests and the ambitions of other powers require some compromise of its ideals. This conclusion is supported by recent public opinion polls in France indicating popular approval of Mitterrand's Chadian policy. [] 25X1

One clear result of the periodic infighting over policy toward Africa has been a drift toward the recentralization of policy control in the hands of the President. There are many signs of this trend:

Nonetheless, the weak French economy will hinder an activist policy in Africa. The Mitterrand government's initial policies had seriously weakened the French economy by the end of its first year in office in June 1982. Although Mitterrand is now carrying out an austerity program designed to restore balance to the economy, the process will take time. Thus, despite France's obvious economic and political interest in key African states and the ideological emphasis given to foreign aid by the French Socialist Party, aid programs are likely to be affected in some measure by budgetary cutbacks accompanying austerity. [] 25X1

- The forced resignation of Cooperation Minister Cot in late 1982 and his replacement with Mitterrand loyalist Christian Nucci.
- Elysee adviser Penne, assisted since 1982 by Jean-Christophe Mitterrand (the President's son), has emerged as a key policy adviser, according to US Embassy reporting. Penne and the young Mitterrand visit African capitals frequently—where local French Ambassadors apparently are not always kept fully informed of their high-level meetings—and their Elysee office maintains direct telephone contact with important African leaders. []

The African View of Mitterrand's Leadership

Among some Sub-Saharan African states, President Mitterrand's election was seen as an opportunity to get greater French aid and reduce dependence on Soviet political and military support. Generally these were the states—such as Mali, Benin, and Congo—that sought to break away from French influence in the 1960s and 1970s. Although ideologically they still line up with the Soviet Bloc and receive the bulk of their military support from it, they have maintained economic and cultural ties and a measure of military cooperation with France. Congolese President Sassou-Nguesso, according to US Embassy sources, welcomed the Mitterrand victory as one of the left that would make Brazzaville's already close economic ties

Reaffirming Old Ties

French actions in Chad demonstrate that French Socialists want to reassure worried Francophone African presidents—including those previously criticized by the Socialists as dictatorial—that France would honor its military, political, and economic obligations. According to diplomatic and press reporting, the Socialists, like their conservative predecessors, believe

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to France more palatable to influential hardline Congolese Marxists. For the Marxist regime in Benin, Mitterrand's visit in January 1983 marked a reconciliation with Paris after a decade of cool relations highlighted by a mercenary invasion in 1977 that many Beninois thought was French inspired. French economic assistance to Benin rose 25 percent in 1982. Benin, increasingly dissatisfied with the amount and quality of Soviet assistance, hopes that the Mitterrand visit will translate into an even greater increase in French aid. [REDACTED]

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Moderate stalwarts such as Senegal and Cameroon, on the other hand, viewed a Socialist presidency as a threat to their long-established and privileged relationship with France, according to press and US Embassy reporting. They were particularly concerned about demands by French Socialist Party leaders for a substantial reduction in France's military establishment in Africa, for the development of a broader French economic role in areas outside its former colonies, and Mitterrand's coolness toward a number of African heads of state—such as Mobutu of Zaire and Bongo of Gabon—whose autocratic methods of governing violated Socialist positions on human rights. Malian President Traore feared that he also was in disfavor with the Socialists because of poor relations with them after he ousted a leftist government in 1968. [REDACTED]

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African concerns about Mitterrand gradually diminished in the period before the onset of the Chadian crisis. Many African leaders had come to see a basic continuity in French policy despite some changes in style and emphasis. Press and Embassy reporting indicates African leaders applaud French support for:

- African demands for international agreements to minimize fluctuations in prices of agricultural commodities that dominate African export receipts.
- African pressure on the IMF to increase unconditional loans for balance-of-payments financing.
- The African position that Western arms expenditures divert funds from essential development projects in the Third World.
- Criticism of South African military activities in Angola and Namibia. [REDACTED]

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Press and US Embassy reports from the region indicate that the Mitterrand administration has used exchanges of visits with African governments to

strengthen official and personal ties. We believe that visits by Mitterrand and his principal advisers psychologically bolster the political stature of the host African governments and are a valuable adjunct to French development and military assistance. This increased interaction between Francophone Africa and Paris has led to closer cooperation on political matters. In the last year, Senegalese President Diouf has initiated discussions between the Francophone heads of state and French Government officials concerning the formation of a political organization that would be a counterpart to the Francophone economic unions established at independence. It would include all French-speaking African countries and provide a forum for them to discuss international political concerns and to convey their opinions to pertinent foreign governments and institutions. So far, however, the proposal has not advanced beyond the talking stage. [REDACTED]

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The French Presence in Africa: Plus Ça Change . . .

The Mitterrand government's increasing inclination in its African policy to follow the precedent established by conservative French governments is in large part a response to the pressures exerted by its African clients. According to US Embassy reporting, many governments in Sub-Saharan Africa still look first to Paris for assistance in heading off continuing threats of destabilization and a deepening economic crisis. For many African governments, French financial assistance is crucial to sustaining their fragile economies, and French troops are protecting their ruling elites from dissidents or neighboring governments. Most of those seeking French help are former colonies whose government structures, security organizations, linguistic, educational, and cultural norms, and commerce, trade, and industry bear an unmistakable French stamp, even after 20 years of independence. [REDACTED]

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An Economic Lifeline

The French derive substantial benefit from their complex cluster of economic ties with the French-speaking African states. Commercial distribution

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African-French Financial Ties

The West African Monetary Union (UMOA) and the Bank of Central Africa (BEAC)—headquartered since 1972 in Dakar, Senegal, and Douala, Cameroon, respectively—were set up to continue the monetary arrangements between France and the newly independent Francophone states. UMOA's members are Benin, Ivory Coast, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Upper Volta. BEAC membership consists of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, and Gabon. Belonging to these unions requires the African members to relinquish significant control over their monetary policies. They cannot print money, restrict the flow of capital among member countries, or independently revalue their common currency, the African Financial Community Franc (CFAF), which is convertible with the French franc at the fixed rate of 50 to 1. Expansion of domestic credit necessitates the agreement of France and all members of the union and can total no more than 20 percent of each country's tax revenues for the previous year. [REDACTED]

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Franc zone members must deposit their foreign assets in one of the zone's two Central Banks. The banks, in turn, place at least 65 percent of the pooled assets in an operations account in the French treasury.

Through the mid-1970s, this account was in continuous surplus, in effect providing a loan to the French treasury. During the past several years, however, the account has been running increasingly large deficits, reflecting the persistent balance-of-payments problems of two of the zone's more important members, Senegal and Ivory Coast. [REDACTED]

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Along with the monetary unions, African franc zone members and Paris agreed to establish two customs unions, the West African Economic Community (CEAO) and the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC). CEAO membership is the same as that of the UMOA, and the UDEAC's

membership is identical with that of the BEAC. They have facilitated free trade in certain commodities, free movement of labor, and a shared external tariff. The CEAO also has assumed the role of counterbalancing the influence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a group of 16 French- and English-speaking, and two Portuguese-speaking, members established by Nigeria in the mid-1970s as a means of integrating the economies of all West African countries. Although CEAO members belong to ECOWAS, their primary identification has been with the Francophone group and Paris, and the Francophone states view ECOWAS—correctly in our opinion—as an attempt by Lagos to erode French influence in the region. [REDACTED] 25X1

Some of the Francophone states belong to one of the customs unions but not to the monetary organization. Mali, for example, which left the franc zone in 1962, has enjoyed since 1968 an open line of credit with the French treasury, which has been used to cover Bamako's persistent annual budget and trade deficits. The French, however, are now eager to end this increasingly costly connection and have encouraged Mali's membership in the UMOA. In support of the application, Paris has offered to forgive over \$200 million of Mali's debts. Mali's application for renewed membership, however, has been blocked by Upper Volta, which has been involved in a longstanding border dispute with Bamako. [REDACTED] 25X1

The Comoros also has a unique financial relationship with Paris. The former French Overseas Territory did not join the franc zone at independence in 1975, but negotiated an agreement with Paris the following year giving it its own currency—with the same value as the CFAF—and setting up the Comoros Central Bank with the same functions as the zone's other Central Banks in Douala and Dakar. [REDACTED] 25X1

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channels, sources of financing, product standards, and long-established personal ties impel economic and commercial relationships along a well-defined track. Frenchmen in senior positions in many Francophone governments use their influence to assist French firms in obtaining contracts. French companies frequently have as partners senior African government officials to ensure that their interests are protected. French import-export firms, shipping companies, and financial institutions all work together. French investors receive substantial support from Paris in the form of government guarantees by the French Insurance Company for Foreign Trade (COFACE) and access to substantial amounts of concessional money. About half of all official French aid goes to African subsidiaries of French firms.²

The Gambia is considering entry as part of its nascent federation with Senegal. Gabon and Cameroon are sponsoring the former Spanish colony of Equatorial Guinea, which hopes to facilitate trade with its French-speaking neighbors and reduce political instability. Mali and Mauritania, which left the CFAF zone many years ago, have since reentered the customs union, and Mali is seeking to rejoin the monetary union as well.

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Nevertheless, the attraction of the zone for both France and some of the African members is beginning to fade. Its foreign exchange account with the French treasury is a substantial financial drain for Paris because of heavy borrowing by African members to cover their international payments needs. At the same time the Africans complain that they have to suffer for France's economic ills because their currencies are tied to the unstable French franc, yet they have no influence on the decisionmaking process involved in such economic adjustments as devaluation. De facto devaluation—the value of the French franc relative to the dollar has declined by more than 50 percent in the past two years—has increased the balance-of-payments strain on African franc zone governments saddled with substantial debt service payments and oil bills denominated in dollars. Although it provides some stimulus to exports, it also entails price rises for imported food and other staples supplied by non-French sources.

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French economic influence is most fully realized in the institutions of the franc zone—one of the few relatively successful experiments in international monetary and economic integration and the primary factor behind the favorable economic performance of Francophone states relative to their neighbors. The zone provides a common monetary system for its members, overseen by French personnel and guided by French expertise through direct links with the French Central Bank and treasury. The monetary system is administered jointly by two African monetary unions—the West African Monetary Union (UMOA) and the Bank of Central Africa (BEAC). They share a currency—the African Financial Community Franc (CFAF)—that is fully convertible with the French franc (FF) and guaranteed by the French Government at a fixed rate of 50 CFAF to 1 FF. Members of the franc zone can borrow from the French Central Bank at favorable rates and may draw on an unlimited line of credit at a token 1-percent interest. The convertibility of the franc zone currency facilitates international trade and foreign private investment.

Another area of concern for franc zone members is the prevailing high interest rates in France and the freedom to transfer capital reserves within the zone. The Africans claim they are losing sizable amounts of money to French banks that otherwise could be available for local investment. This is particularly worrisome in the larger African economies, such as Ivory Coast, where companies borrow the maximum locally and invest it in French money markets. The Senegalese press reports resentment over what the Africans perceive as support for the faltering French economy at a time when their own economies are deteriorating. The same sources also indicate that Senegal is planning to incorporate a clause in all its trade agreements within the zone forbidding speculative transfers.

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These benefits have prompted other African states to consider joining the zone. Madagascar and Zaïre currently are debating the value of membership, while

² The principal institutions disbursing French assistance are the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation (CCCE) and the Aid and Cooperation Fund (FAC). The CCCE offers subsidized loans with interest rates as low as 1.8 percent and repayment periods of 30 years after a 10-year grace period. The FAC is the instrument for extending grant aid.

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The deteriorating economic positions of franc zone countries are prompting a major reassessment of membership by all parties. According to US Embassy reporting, the Africans want to shift some of the burden of regional development from Francophone community institutions to other Western and Arab countries. They also are looking into the possibilities of amalgamating their monetary and customs organizations with ECOWAS, which has indicated during the past year that it would be receptive to such a move. Togo, Ivory Coast, and Senegal already rely on the IMF for the sort of balance-of-payments support that France previously provided. French press reports indicate that Paris also would like to shift some of the financial cost of supporting the franc zone to the IMF and other multilateral organizations such as the European Economic Community and the World Bank.

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The French Military Relationship

Both the French and the Africans have benefited from a continuing French military presence in the region. The French security umbrella has protected ruling African elites and extensive French commercial interests from both domestic dissidents and the ambitions of neighboring governments.³ Although the Mitterrand government has curtailed some security assistance programs in Africa—Paris is providing fewer personal bodyguards for conservative African leaders, for example—the overall military cooperation program is largely untouched.

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³ French forces have intervened in Africa far more often than those of any other outside power—at least 18 times in the last 25 years,

These interventions usually have occurred in areas of economic or strategic interest to the French. The French have been called in by host governments to help repel invasions from neighboring countries (as in Zaire in 1978); to protect Western nationals and business interests (in Chad); to mount air operations against insurgents (in Mauritania and Chad); to provide a government with security protection at the time of independence (in Djibouti in 1977). In at least one instance, however, Paris acted on its own initiative, engineering the overthrow of Emperor Bokassa of the Central African Empire in 1979. The move probably was provoked as much by Bokassa's flirtation with the Libyans as by the savagery of his rule—the French Government's official reason for intervention.

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The Mitterrand government has steadily increased military aid to black Africa, in absolute terms and as a proportion of Paris's total foreign assistance budget.

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The extensive network of personal contacts between African and French military personnel developed during the postindependence period continues, solidified by regular training and joint maneuvers held at regular intervals in the African states. In Ivory Coast, for example, the US Embassy reports that a strong French military tradition has developed within the armed forces; most senior and middle-grade officers began their careers in the French military, and prospective officers and many enlisted personnel usually undergo training in France during their careers.

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The presence of French troops is welcomed by many influential members of African military establishments as a deterrent to security threats and support to the local military command. US Embassy reporting indicates that Niger is counting on French military support to counter any invasion by dissidents backed by neighboring Libya, which has made no secret of its designs on the uranium-rich country.

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According to French Government statistics, the military support budget now accounts for about 20 percent of total French aid to Sub-Saharan Africa.

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Even before the Chadian crisis, the Mitterrand government demonstrated that it is prepared under certain circumstances to use its military power to protect its interests and support its friends:

- In May 1982, Defense Minister Hernu, according to the US Embassy in Abidjan, promised that France would increase its military assistance and publicly indicated that French guarantees to defend Ivory Coast from external aggression could be invoked in the event of external support for Ivorian dissidents.
- According to US Embassy reporting, the French similarly have reaffirmed their intention to provide military training and assistance for Niger. They also have indicated to US and Nigerien officials that France would intervene directly to defend Niger against overt Libyan aggression, despite the lack of a formal defense agreement between Paris and Niamey.
- The Mitterrand government has responded to Djiboutian concerns that France would reduce its dominant military, political, and economic assistance role there. Visits by Cooperation Minister Cot and Prime Minister Mauroy in December 1982 resulted in commitments by France to maintain its military presence (about 3,500 personnel) and economic aid.
- Even in Gabon, whose authoritarian President Bongo continues to cause resentment among French Socialist leaders, the Mitterrand government has signaled its intention to maintain close security relations by increasing French participation in the joint military maneuvers of June 1983.
- The French have maintained their military advisory presence in Zaire; French officers continue to exercise command responsibilities in the elite 31st Brigade. In discussions with US officials, the French repeatedly have emphasized that, although they are unhappy with Mobutu's dictatorial style and tolerance of corruption, they see no practical alternative to supporting his government.

French actions in Chad offer the best evidence of the Mitterrand government's willingness to resort to military means to protect the interests of France and its allies. The almost 2,000 French troops now in Chad represent the largest single contingency force sent to Africa since the Algerian conflict. Moreover, these troops have been deployed in forward positions, and Mitterrand has publicly pledged that they will resist any Libyan or dissident efforts to move south of the 15th parallel. We believe the French Government realizes that it could renege on this commitment only at the risk of enormous damage to its prestige and interests in Africa.

Still, the US Embassy reports that France's initial reluctance to send troops to aid the Habre government has made Africans uneasy about the Socialist government's willingness to respond decisively in a military crisis. Such concerns, for example, have been expressed by Senegal. Cameroon also doubts that the French would provide assistance quickly enough to handle an emergency like the border crisis with Nigeria in 1981. As a result, the Yaounde government is planning to increase its weapons purchases and expand its military capabilities so it can better meet military emergencies on its own. More recently, US Embassy reports from various African capitals and public documentary evidence indicate that senior African officials are critical of the timing and restricted nature of French military support for the Habre government during the fighting in August around Faya Largeau. Some are convinced that a more decisive French intervention—possibly just a few airstrikes at Faya Largeau—would have prevented Goukouni's advance to the "red line" in August.

The Fruits of Assimilation

One of the pillars of French influence in black Africa has been France's cultural relationship with the area. During the colonial period, the French undertook a massive program to indoctrinate the African elite with French culture. In Cameroon, for example, the President and Prime Minister, as well as a large percentage

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of mid- to upper-level officials in many ministries were educated in France. US Embassies in several former French colonies report that the French still donate crates of old school texts that begin with an account of "our ancestors" the Gauls and provide a highly negative image of the United States. [REDACTED]

Since independence, the cultural assimilation process has been taken over by Francophone African governments. They view the use of the French language and cultural patterns as a way to unify their ethnically divided states and give local institutions some international validity.⁴ Education at all levels is in French with a French curriculum, and schools are heavily staffed with French teachers. As a result, we believe that a French mind-set—with its affinity for French institutions and cultural achievements and its negative image of many aspects of US cultural, political, and commercial activities—has developed within the political and military establishments of many French-speaking African states. These perceptions are reinforced by Francophone leaders' continuing close personal contacts with members of the French Government and military. [REDACTED]

French influence also is preeminent in newspapers, radio, and television. US Embassies report that, although all Francophone African governments except Djibouti have established editorial control of the media, they must rely on the French for technical assistance and training. More importantly, they also depend on the official French news agency for their international news coverage, with the result that the local audience hears the French Government's interpretation of current events. With the expansion in Africa of media facilities in recent years, French editorial opinions more directly reach a wider African audience than in the past. For example, the Gabon-based Radio Africa No. 1, whose senior management is drawn from the French Government-owned news agency SOFIRAD, dominates Gabonese domestic broadcasting and is a primary source of news reporting in much of the rest of Francophone Africa. [REDACTED]

The very intensity of Francophone Africa's cultural identification with France, however, has provoked a reaction among younger elites. As a result, a number

⁴ Except in Madagascar, where literacy in a vernacular language is well established, the French language in former French territories is the key to the world beyond the village. [REDACTED]

of Francophone countries are seeking to diminish French involvement in their educational systems and the media. Niger, for example, is reducing the number of French teachers in its schools and has raised the percentage of broadcasts in local languages from 10 to 70 percent over the last few years. Backlash from a sense of "overassimilation" could cut sharply into the French cultural presence in Africa in the future and accelerate the process of Africanization. [REDACTED]

The Role of French Expatriates

More than 200,000 French citizens⁵—a fifth of all those living abroad—live in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the largest concentrations in Ivory Coast (40,000) and Gabon (27,000). In our judgment, the cumulative day-to-day influence of the French communities, particularly in the economic sector, probably has an even greater influence on African government policies than do exchanges between African and French officials at the highest levels. The closely knit group of French officials and expatriates living in Gabon, for example, is bitterly opposed to the Socialist regime in Paris and is urging Libreville to distance itself from the Mitterrand government. In Ivory Coast, according to press reports, a similar coalition is working behind the scenes with senior Ivorian political figures to ensure a pro-French successor to aging President Houphouet. [REDACTED]

French businessmen in Francophone Africa are concerned by what they call an economic "invasion" of the area by the United States, a concern echoed by senior officials in Paris as well as by Mitterrand himself.⁶ Elf-Aquitaine, the largest French oil producer in Africa, is deeply involved in Francophone African politics and is an important instrument of the French policy to keep out US and other foreign commercial competitors. A major factor behind the company's aggressive posture is its reliance on black Africa for over 80 percent of its total production of

⁵ Some estimates range as high as 350,000 or more. [REDACTED]

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The Distinctive French Presence in Gabon

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Paris has refined its use of political and military influence and its targeting of economic aid and technical assistance to a higher degree in Gabon than anywhere else in the region. The effort focuses on what will benefit French commercial interests. []

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Gabon is an important French trade partner, supplying petroleum, manganese, uranium, and lumber. According to US Embassy reporting, large-scale French investment in the development of these resources has led to intertwining relationships throughout the trade, manufacturing, and foreign aid sectors, and to French control of the Gabonese economy. This network of economic relationships has spread into the political sphere, with close ties developing between French business interests and the Gabonese and French Governments. The French Government-owned oil company Elf-Aquitaine, for example, organized and finances the Gabonese Presidential Guard, which is responsible for the personal safety of President Bongo. []

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[] the "Clan Gabonais"—moves with ease among high levels in the Gabonese Government, French commercial houses, and the French Government and advises President Bongo on political and security matters. []

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485,000 barrels of oil per day. The company maintains close links with Francophone African leaders, particularly with Presidents Bongo of Gabon and Sassou-Nguesso of Congo, according to press reports. []

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The "Clan," as well as most French army and air force officers stationed at Libreville, is rigidly conservative in its politics and opposes Mitterrand's Socialist government. They have consistently used their influence to ensure that French conservative political interests are not damaged by Gabonese—or French—policies and that Libreville channels French economic assistance to the benefit of French firms. US Embassy sources report that Paris recently instructed the French Ambassador to ensure that French technical advisers direct all Gabonese Government contracts to French companies, with the threat of a quick transfer to a less desirable post for noncompliance. []

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The Gabonese Government, according to the US Embassy, welcomes the stability that results from the pervasive French military and security presence, which includes regular units of French troops stationed near Libreville, a large contingent of official advisers, a motley group of French mercenaries, [] and a number of former members of a now-disbanded Gaullist paramilitary group. In addition, former members of the French Foreign Legion who control the Presidential Guard and the "Corsican Mafia"—French police officers directing internal security for the government—are powerful elements in Gabon's security organization. []

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In addition to the businessmen, there are some 10,000 French technical advisers in Africa, many holding positions that give them access to information and the means to exert influence on behalf of French interests. In Ivory Coast, for example, US Embassy sources report that French advisers are placed in nearly every Ivorian ministry. They occupy a number of senior ministerial positions and are responsible for much of the staffwork and planning. They have the ear of the

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Oil and Politics

25X1 In 1982 over 80 percent of the production of Elf-Aquitaine, the French state oil group, was in Africa, and the company is the leading oil prospector in the region. Four countries account for most of the activity—Nigeria, Congo, Gabon, and Cameroon. Industry sources claim that within the next 10 years Elf's holdings in Angola will rank second only to those it has in Nigeria and will be capable of producing as much as 200,000 barrels per day. [redacted]

The French Government is the company's principal shareholder, and press sources claim that President Mitterrand, like his predecessors, is usually involved in the company's major policy decisions. He regards the company as an instrument of French foreign policy and a major source of government revenue.

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25X1 Elf's policies closely affect local politics in those Francophone African countries where the company dominates the oil industry—Gabon, Congo, and Cameroon. Earlier this year, a dispute between the company and the Congolese Government over Brazzaville's share in company profits prompted Elf to retaliate by cutting back on output and exploration activities in the country. The conflict has since been resolved by an agreement to adjust prices and tax revenues on a sliding scale to reflect trends on the international oil market. This situation was reminiscent of a production slowdown by Elf in the 1970s in reaction to Congo's demand for higher profits. Then the move almost suffocated the Congolese economy and spurred political unrest that resulted in the assassination of President Ngouabi. [redacted]

A similar imbroglio has broken out between Elf-Gabon and Gabonese President Bongo. The government wants to raise its share in the company from 25 percent to 34 or 40 percent by the end of 1983.

Although Elf has been holding back on production, it has, at the same time, made relatively little effort to find and develop new resources, a policy that has led to a serious depletion of Gabon's known reserves. In turn, the shortfall in oil revenues forced Gabonese economic planners to extend the 1980-82 interim economic plan for a year and a half and hold off on the new five-year development plan until 1984. [redacted] 25X1

Elf's managers are worried by the increasing competition from Western oil groups in developing oil potential in various Francophone African countries. In Ivory Coast, for example, American companies have made significant discoveries in areas that Elf had earlier abandoned as noncommercial deposits. In Cameroon, Elf lost its position as the sole oil producer when the Cameroonian Government invited US companies to share in the growing Cameroonian oil sector. Even Gabonese President Bongo, a longtime supporter of Elf, is using the company's investment slowdown as a pretext for inviting non-French firms to develop some of Gabon's oilfields. This has already led to one major find offshore last year by an American firm. [redacted] 25X1

According to press accounts, because of Elf's close ties with the French Government and its economic importance, chiefs of state of Francophone oil-producing countries in Africa closely followed the selection this past summer of a new chief executive for Elf.

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minister and frequently are involved directly in the decisionmaking process. In Gabon, French advisers are using their government positions to screen non-French contacts.

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Changing Relations Between Non-Francophone Africa and France

In addition to strengthening ties with Francophone Africa, the Mitterrand regime is building on previous French efforts to develop financially profitable relations with other areas of the continent. To those areas outside the French community, Paris is an attractive source of trade and investment because of France's willingness to extend credit on lenient terms to African business partners, as well as its long experience in African markets. Within the last decade, Nigeria and South Africa have become France's most important trade partners in Sub-Saharan Africa, thanks to Nigeria's high-quality oil and Pretoria's role as a supplier of strategic minerals, particularly manganese, titanium, coal, uranium, and chrome. French firms also are active in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Mozambique, and Angola, and are partners with Paris in expanding French access to the mineral wealth of Zaire.

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To obtain African support for this increased involvement, Presidents Shagari of Nigeria, Nyerere of Tanzania, Stevens of Sierra Leone, and Moi of Kenya were among the first African leaders invited to visit Paris after Mitterrand's election. In addition, Paris worked hard to expand attendance at the annual Franco-African summit, with the results that last year's meeting in Kinshasa was the best attended ever. More than two-thirds of Africa's 51 states sent representatives, including over a third from outside the community of former French colonial possessions.

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Nigeria

Nigeria provides an outstanding example of Paris's ability to woo non-Francophone Africans. The French pushed their way into the Nigerian market in the late 1970s at the peak of Lagos's unhappiness with Britain's handling of the transition to majority rule in Rhodesia. Nigeria is now the principal site of new French investment in black Africa, and in 1980-81, according to press sources, Lagos awarded French

Despite the role of French expatriates in maintaining French overseas interests, the Mitterrand government is looking for ways to reduce the influence of the predominantly conservative French communities in Africa on the policymaking apparatus of the government in Paris. President Mitterrand, for example, has reorganized the once-powerful French security organization (DGSE) with its network of conservative Gaullist agents and contacts throughout Francophone Africa and removed its Paris-based core of old Africa hands. According to press reports, the Mitterrand government believes that information supplied by these agents was responsible for many of its initial problems of distrust and mutual misunderstanding in Francophone Africa. In the Central African Republic, for example, press sources report that news of the transfer of power from then President Dacko to Kolingba in September 1981 was withheld temporarily from Paris by French overseas intelligence agents in order to deny Patasse a role in the Bangui government.

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companies over \$3.7 billion in new contracts. The French have been doing well in the construction sector and also are active in transport, retailing, and manufacturing. Peugeot, for example, has the largest automobile assembly plant in Nigeria and produced nearly 60 thousand vehicles for the local market last year. []

Nigeria's improving economic relations with France generally have not been reflected in their political dealings, however. Lagos has not forgotten de Gaulle's support of the Biafran secessionists and still sees Paris as its primary rival for regional leadership. Other contentious issues are French military sales to South Africa, Paris's reluctance to press South Africa on a timetable for Namibian independence, and France's military presence in West and Central Africa. Nigeria sent its foreign minister to attend the Franco-African summit at Kinshasa in 1982, but the US Embassy in Lagos reported that Nigerian government officials viewed the meeting as a manifestation of the alarming extent of French influence in Africa. []

Southern Africa

In southern Africa, contrary to widespread expectations, the Mitterrand government, in our judgment, has been wary about fulfilling Socialist campaign pledges to pursue an activist policy on behalf of liberation movements. Some policy changes have taken place, but Paris's actions generally have failed to match its rhetoric. []

The continuity of French policy toward South Africa has been particularly striking. Despite shrill criticism by French officials of South African racial policies, Paris has carefully sought to insulate substantial French-South African commercial ties from the political fallout—with some success so far. The Mitterrand government, for example, has defended the participation of French companies in the controversial Koeberg nuclear reactor construction project, agreed to fabricate nuclear fuel rods necessary for its eventual operation, and approved large purchases of South African coal and uranium by state-owned companies to meet French energy needs. Moreover, according to the US Embassy in Pretoria, French officials have privately acknowledged that, despite their government's adamant public stand on enforcing French compliance with the mandatory UN arms embargo,

the South African defense force has been able to obtain spare parts for its Mirage fighters and French-built helicopters on the international market. []

At the same time, the Mitterrand government has pursued efforts (begun under Giscard) to enhance French influence elsewhere in the region. High-level French envoys have visited nearly all of the region's capitals, and several of its prominent leaders—including Zimbabwean Prime Minister Mugabe and Zambian President Kaunda—have been received in Paris. []

US Embassy reporting indicates the French have not significantly expanded economic assistance to the region, but modest military assistance has been given to Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Burundi—countries where French officials claim to see possibilities for countering Soviet influence. []

According to US Embassy officials in Paris, the Mitterrand government's primary political objective in the region has been to achieve a rapid settlement in Namibia to reduce the risks of a prolonged—and possibly enlarged—Soviet and Cuban influence. We believe, however, that French officials are divided over the best approach to achieving a settlement, and especially over the issue of linking Namibian independence to a withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. []

Some foreign ministry officials, [] hold the view that Luanda will ask the Cubans to leave only after Namibian independence is guaranteed and the threat of South African intervention against Angola is reduced. Cheysson publicly has distanced France from any efforts to link a Namibian settlement to a Cuban withdrawal, arguing that such efforts constitute external interference in Angolan affairs and give South Africa a pretext for remaining in Namibia. []

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Other foreign ministry officials and Elysee adviser Penne, however, apparently believe that, although France should not publicly support linking the two issues, some linkage will be necessary to achieve a settlement. We believe, based on discussions between French and US officials, that Penne may be less susceptible than Cheysson to pressures from the Socialist Party on Namibia. Penne, in our view, is more committed than Cheysson to France's participation in the Western Contact Group, at least in part because concerned Frontline states—especially Angola—have asked that France use its influence within the Contact Group to facilitate a settlement. []

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Zaire

In contrast to Nigeria and South Africa, Zaire has found its association with France useful politically as well as economically. Mobutu's relationship with French President Giscard d'Estaing was a key element in the Zairian President's foreign policies. France's financial support enabled Mobutu to reduce his economic dependence on Belgium—the former colonial power—and Paris's military support was an important factor in maintaining the stability of his regime. Mobutu's initial shock over the Socialist victory in Paris—he had been on poor terms with the party for years—has eased substantially. Mitterrand has increased French military assistance, maintained a large cultural program, and retained France's position as one of Zaire's major foreign creditors. French political support also has continued, as illustrated by Mitterrand's willingness to hold the Franco-African summit in Zaire at a time when Mobutu's standing with other African leaders was at a low point following his recognition of Israel. []

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Outlook

The relationship between black Africa and France has endured the crises of decolonization, the vicissitudes of the African states' economic decline, continuing threats to their political stability, and the Socialist victory in Paris. In our judgment, the Francophone

states for the foreseeable future—whatever the outcome in Chad—will continue to look to Paris as their most reliable source of security and economic support:

- For the poorer Francophone countries such as Niger, the Central African Republic, Upper Volta, and Djibouti, French financial aid is vital to government survival. French funds provide food and other essential goods for politically sensitive urban areas. French personnel, needed to keep many of the African economies and governments working, depend on Paris to pay their salaries. There is no other Western donor at present willing to step in and assume France's role in propping up some of the world's poorest countries.

- For wealthier Francophone states, such as Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Gabon, we believe the need for a substantial French military and economic presence will remain strong. Ruling elites, still heavily influenced by French education and military training, are concerned over the Libyan threat to the region's stability and feel particularly vulnerable to efforts by Qadhafi to exploit popular unhappiness with the economic situation and declining urban living standards within their countries. We anticipate that they will oppose any efforts by Paris to reduce the presence of French troops, whom the Africans view as an important deterrent to local unrest. French involvement in these more sophisticated economies is essential because of the lack of adequate African capital or skilled personnel. []

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Nevertheless, there are a number of trends developing that could, over the long term, jeopardize these ties:

- Governments in West Africa will be counting on Paris to blunt Qadhafi's adventurism in the region. Events in Chad and the French response to Libyan military activities there, in our judgment, will shape the attitude of other African governments toward the French military presence in Africa. If budgetary constraints make Paris reluctant to meet what neighboring African countries believe to be their security needs, this will cause many of those countries now depending on French support to have second thoughts on how far they can depend on the French security umbrella.

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- The Africans will be looking to France to be more supportive of their positions on issues they deem vital. West African Governments, for example, are increasingly resentful of Paris's continued refusal to cut off dealings with Qadhafi, particularly sales of military spare parts. Another contentious issue is French participation in South Africa's nuclear program. If French business interests build another nuclear plant in South Africa, it will almost certainly prompt a storm of criticism from the Africans. The Nigerian press already is sounding warnings on this subject, and public pressure could force Lagos to take some retaliatory measures against French firms operating in Nigeria.
- A French decision to go ahead with reported proposals to overhaul or revise existing franc zone arrangements to secure an economic advantage for metropolitan France would cause great concern among African members over Paris's resolve to maintain economic stability in their countries. At the same time, African members could threaten to pull out of the community if Paris is forced to continue lowering the international value of the French franc, resulting in increased cost for African members' debt payments and essential imports such as oil. In addition, the Africans are likely to urge Paris to curb the sizable flow of capital from Africa to France. [REDACTED]
- French Socialist support of African opposition movements, particularly those in single-party Francophone states with publicized human rights violations, will continue, in our view, to aggravate relations between these governments and Paris. African regimes in Guinea, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic, for example, continue to suspect French Government collusion with dissidents harbored in France.
- African uneasiness over too great a dependence on France is certain to increase as the present generation of leaders committed to a French role in Africa passes away in the near future and is replaced by a more nationalistic elite. A desire to reduce the French hold on Francophone Africa could eventually receive a significant boost if popular resentment continues to grow over the French overseas communities' ability to weather African economic problems and maintain their affluent lifestyles while Africans cope with financial pressures and declining living standards.
- The rapidly rising costs of Paris's traditional kinds of financial assistance—covering budgetary and external deficits and paying salaries of essential French technicians—will be more difficult for the French Government to sustain as it copes with France's own economic slowdown. Paris also will have to back away from funding costly prestige development projects, such as the Kribi liquefied natural gas project in Cameroon and the Konkoure hydroelectric project in Guinea because of uncertainty over their long-term economic payoff.

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Implications for the United States

French willingness to accept the military and economic risks of a possible confrontation with Libya in Chad suggests that the Mitterrand government, like its predecessors, has come to regard the French presence in Africa as an essential element in preserving French prestige and influence on the world stage. At the same time, Paris's acute awareness of its own inability to continue to fund this presence alone has led it, in Chad and in some other instances, to look to the United States for assistance. [REDACTED]

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In recent months, for example, French officials have suggested that the United States increase economic assistance to Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Djibouti—three of France's most important African outposts—and have sought to obtain US financing for French arms sales to Niger. In discussions with US officials, the French also have sought US backing for their attempts to wean African "progressives"—including Congo, Benin, and Madagascar—from Soviet influence and to encourage Guinean leader Sekou Toure's government toward less repressive domestic policies. [REDACTED]

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In our view, the Mitterrand government is likely to continue to see both tactical and long-term advantages in cooperating with the United States in Africa, but such cooperation will have its limits. France will probably look at each situation on a case-by-case basis and always with a view toward preserving the primacy

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of French interests—particularly in the Francophone countries—and projecting an image of French independence in relations with the Third World. For example:

- We believe that the French probably will continue to favor close cooperation with the United States on Chad, in part as a means of easing the strain on its own resources. At the same time, Paris probably will try to avoid open conflict with Libya, fearing this could mire France in prolonged hostilities in Chad. They will not want to do anything that would provoke new activities by Libyan leader Qadhafi in Francophone Africa, enhance his prestige among Third World states, and perhaps push him closer to the Soviets.
- We also believe Paris will continue to distance itself from any efforts explicitly to link a Namibian settlement to Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola. At the same time, US Embassy reporting indicates that some French officials recognize that some agreement on the Cuban troop issue may be necessary to reach a settlement on Namibia and are willing to work privately with the United States to reach a compromise among the interested parties.

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Nevertheless, we believe French attitudes toward the United States remain ambivalent and the government is likely to keep a wary eye on US activities in Africa. It is fearful of what it sees as a US predilection to convert African quarrels into East-West confrontations and suspicious that Washington intends to supplant French influence in Africa. Although these aspects of French thinking will continue to make France an often prickly and difficult ally, they also are likely to have the more positive effect of reinforcing France's willingness to maintain its military and economic commitments to Africa. The French suspect that any slackening of their commitment would drive the Africans to look elsewhere—and particularly to the United States—for support.

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French concerns about US objectives in Africa also will be influenced by French commercial and business circles. They see the United States as a dangerous competitor in "their" African markets, and we anticipate that they will use what clout they have in Paris and in African capitals to keep US businesses out and to make life difficult for those already in place.

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From the African point of view, any decision by Paris to ease its own economic straits by cutting back on its financial and military commitments in black Africa would prompt an intensive campaign, particularly by Francophone leaders, to find substitute partners. High on their list will be Washington. At a minimum, we anticipate requests for a substantial increase in US economic aid. In addition, Washington would be approached about stepping up its military role in the region—as indicated by urgent appeals this summer by Houphouet and others for US military intervention in Chad. The Africans probably would try to enlist US help in persuading the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to increase their assistance programs and soften their terms.

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African leaders will view Washington's reaction to their requests as a sign of the importance to the United States of its African relationships. A favorable response would be well publicized by the Africans, who probably would respond by being more supportive of the United States on North-South and other international issues. They also could lessen their public criticism of US policies in southern Africa.

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Failure to satisfy African expectations, however, could provoke criticism of US policy, create a more difficult climate for US businesses, and could prompt threats to turn to the Soviets, the Libyans, or even the Iranians for help. Such conditions also could prompt the Libyans and the Soviets to take the initiative. Politically and economically weak countries in the region—especially those with sizable Muslim populations—would be especially susceptible to Libyan blandishments or pressure. Moscow—which has long viewed France as a competitor for influence in Africa, particularly in training and arming the military forces of Francophone countries—also probably would try to take advantage of any slackening of Paris's interest in aiding Sub-Saharan nations. Soviet efforts probably would continue to concentrate on extending long-term credits for the purchase of weapons and military training, rather than trying to match the level of economic aid now given by France. In addition, Moscow would use the opportunity to blame African economic hardships on the failure of both Washington and Paris to step in with financial aid.

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